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VOC FOR PGM/FN  
BACKGROUNDER NO. 5-6300  
JACK CURTISS/CARACAS

DECEMBER 6, 1978

# VENEZUELAN ELECTORAL UPSET

ANNCR:

ANALYSTS AND POLITICAL COMMENTATORS IN VENEZUELA ARE REVIEWING THE EVENTS AND FACTORS WHICH CONTRIBUTED TO SUNDAY'S SURPRISE UPSET VICTORY BY OPPOSITION PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE LUIS HERRERA CAMPINI. VOA CORRESPONDENT JACK CURTISS REPORTS.

VOICE:

THE MOST OBJECTIVE PUBLIC OPINION POLLS HAD INDICATED AN ELECTION TOO CLOSE TO CALL, AND A SIZABLE BLOC OF LAST-MINUTE UNDECIDED VOTERS. BUT MANY RESIDENT SO-CALLED EXPERTS COULD NOT BELIEVE THAT THE RULING ACCION DEMOCRATICA PARTY, BUTTRESSED BY THE LARGEST BUDGET AND PUBLIC SPENDING PROGRAM IN VENEZUELAN HISTORY, AND WITH A DYNAMIC AND POPULAR INCUMBENT PRESIDENT, COULD POSSIBLY LOSE THE CONTEST. BUT WITHIN THREE HOURS AFTER THE FINAL BALLOTS WERE CAST, AN AVALANCHE OF GREEN PARTY FLAGS AND POSTERS, WIELDED BY DELIRIOUS (EXCITED) OPPOSITION SUPPORTERS, FILLED CARACAS STREETS WITH THE DIN OF A VICTORY CELEBRATION. THE IMPOSSIBLE HAD HAPPENED. THE OLDEST, MOST POWERFUL, BEST ORGANIZED PARTY, ACCION DEMOCRATICA, WENT DOWN TO UNEXPECTED DEFEAT. THE SURPRISE RESULTS STUNNED MANY WHO HAD COME TO ACCEPT THE RULING PARTY'S APPARENT COMPLACENCY AS EVIDENCE OF CERTAIN TRIUMPH AT THE POLLS. TO CARLOS RANGEL, AN AUTHOR, EDITOR, AND VETERAN ANALYST OF VENEZUELAN AFFAIRS, THE RESULT HAS SHATTERED A LONG-STANDING POLITICAL MYTH.

TAPE: CUT ONE -- RANGEL

"ONCE AND FOR ALL, MYTH WILL DIE IN VENEZUELA THAT THE GOVERNMENT, BY ITS POWER AND THE COMMAND OF THE PUBLIC EXPENDITURE, CANNOT LOSE AN ELECTION. THIS IS A MYTH THAT COMES DOWN FROM THE NINETEENTH CENTURY, WHEN WE HAD ELECTIONS THAT WERE ALWAYS RIGGED, AND WHICH THE GOVERNMENT ALWAYS WON. THEN WE HAD AN INTERREGNUM

FOR ABOUT FORTY YEARS OF TYRANNY. AND THERE WAS NO PRETENSE OF ELECTIONS... AND THEN SINCE NINETEEN-FORTY-SIX, WE HAVE HAD SEVEN REAL ELECTIONS. AND STILL PEOPLE STAND IN AWE OF THE POWER OF THE STATE, ALL THE POWER OF THE GOVERNMENT. AND HERE IN THIS RECENTLY HELD ELECTION, MANY PEOPLE FELT THE GOVERNMENT JUST COULD NOT LOSE. NOW I THINK THIS MYTH WILL BE PUT TO REST, ONCE AND FOR ALL, BECAUSE NOW THE GOVERNMENT HAS LOST THREE ELECTIONS IN A ROW. THE LAST THREE TIMES THE GOVERNING POWER HAS LOST ELECTIONS. AND WE MIGHT SEE THE DEVELOPMENT OF A NEW SITUATION WHERE THE GOVERNMENT ALWAYS LOSES ELECTIONS."

VOICE:

THE USE OF U.S. POLITICAL CAMPAIGN CONSULTANTS AND MEDIA ADVISERS WAS A NOTED FEATURE OF BOTH MAJOR PARTY CAMPAIGNS. BUT DESPITE THE UNDISPUTED REACH OF RADIO AND TELEVISION MISTER RANGEL FEELS THE IMPACT OF BROADCAST POLITICAL ADVERTISING HAS BEEN MARGINAL -- NOT DECISIVE, ESPECIALLY IN LIGHT OF THE POOR SHOWING OF THE DIEGO ARRIA, A TElegenic YOUNG INDEPENDENT CANDIDATE WHO BASED HIS PRESIDENTIAL CAMPAIGN ON MASTERY OF THE MEDIA.

TAPE: CUT TWO -- RANGE

"THERE WAS A CAMPAIGN, THE ARRIA CAMPAIGN, THAT USED THE MOST SOPHISTICATED TECHNIQUES OF CAMPAIGNING, WITH ELECTRONIC MEDIA. THE MAN HIMSELF WAS AN ATTRACTIVE CANDIDATE. VERY SMART . . . AND HE WAS SIMPLY CRUSHED. ...THE ELECTORATE IS SIMPLY NOT FOOLED BY EVEN THE BEST MEDIA CAMPAIGN, BY THE MOST ATTRACTIVE CANDIDATE WITH THE MOST ATTRACTIVE WIFE..."

VOICE:

AS FOR PRESIDENT-ELECT HERRERA'S COME-FROM-BEHIND VICTORY, MISTER RANGEL SEES A REASONABLY SIMPLE EXPLANATION: MANY SUPPORTERS OF THE EIGHT MINOR PARTIES ALSO CONTESTING THE PRESIDENCY ULTIMATELY DECIDED TO CAST THEIR BALLOTS FOR THE ONLY OPPOSITION CANDIDATE WITH A REAL CHANCE TO WIN.

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WJL/RD